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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: A/S FELTMAN DISCUSSES MEK, MINORITIES AND LGBT
WITH MOHR

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting on December 14 with NEA A/S Feltman, the Minister of Human Rights, Wijdan Selim, expressed her belief that her Ministry has made progress in inculcating a greater respect for human rights throughout Iraqi society, but that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) remain problematic. The Minister was complimentary of the role that Coalition Forces have played in promoting human rights and expressed concerns about her ministry's ability to hold the ISF accountable after the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

With respect to Camp Ashraf, Selim stated that she had warned the GOI of the consequences of initiating a forced removal of the Muhajideen e-Haq (MEK) before the UN Periodic Review of Iraq's human rights record scheduled for February, but that her warnings have gone unheeded. Selim also expressed her belief that the primary concern of Iraq's minority groups was not security, but rather the increasing Islamization of Iraqi society, which they feel discriminates against them. With respect to reports of killings of Iraq's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community, the Minister stated that her ministry is working to ensure the rights of all Iraqis but that raising the specific issue of LGBT murders would only make this community a bigger target for extremists. END SUMMARY.

PROGRESS BEING MADE

12. (C) On December 14, A/S Feltman met with Minister Selim to express U.S. support for the Ministry of Human Rights' (MoHR) efforts to develop a culture of human rights in Iraq and to investigate allegations of abuse. The Minister expressed her belief that since 2006 the MoHR has taken off as an institution and is now in possession of a dedicated, well-trained staff that continues to learn on the job. Selim argued that tangible progress has been made in raising awareness of human rights throughout Iraqi society and, as evidence, pointed to the MoHR's collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education to add human rights courses into school and university curricula. Selim remained concerned, however, that the MoHR had not yet changed the mindset of the ISF regarding human rights and said that the ISF were still responsible for abuses and often deny ministry inspectors access to their detention facilities. However, she did note that the MoHR's reports on these abuses have been influential in changing behavior in some instances.

13. (C) Selim complimented Coalition Forces for their support to the MoHR, including logistical support for prison visits and assistance in convincing ISF commanders to allow the MoHR to conduct its inspections. Selim worried that the scheduled withdrawal of Coalition Forces from Iraq might reduce this logistical assistance and that the ISF would seek to block the MoHR's access to their facilities without U.S. forces accompanying the inspectors. She noted that while the PM and his Chief of Staff were complimentary of her efforts, they did not always give her their full support. Selim also

expressed concern that the withdrawal would lead to an overall decrease in security, which would in turn prompt the ISF to overlook human rights issues as they sought to maintain stability. A/S Feltman replied that U.S. policy in Iraq would continue to place a heavy emphasis on human rights and that despite the withdrawal of U.S. forces, the U.S. would continue to use its influence with the GOI to underscore the importance of respecting those rights. Underscore the importance of respecting those rights.

MEK

14. (C) On the MEK, A/S Feltman expressed concern about the GOI's plans to forcibly relocate residents of Camp Ashraf in the near future pointing out that if the move resulted in violence, then Iraq would be heavily criticized at the UN Periodic Review of Iraq's human rights record scheduled for February at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. The Minister agreed with this assessment and said that she had warned others in the GOI about this potentiality, but that these warnings were not being heeded. Selim expressed frustration that she was caught in the middle of the GOI-MEK struggle because many in the GOI wanted to resettle the MEK regardless of the merits, but that the MEK was also violating human rights by holding residents at Ashraf against their will. She said that the GOI was planning a visit to the European Union in mid-January to lay out its case for relocation and to request greater assistance from the EU in resettling Ashraf residents outside of Iraq.

BAGHDAD 00003259 002 OF 002

MINORITY CONCERNS

15. (C) Asked about the situation of Iraq's minority communities, Selim (herself a Christian) noted that minorities have been leaving Iraq since 1990, but that emigration has increased over the past six years due to the security situation in Iraq. She stated that the main concern of minorities now is not security, but rather the increasing Islamization of Iraqi society. Selim pointed to the pervasive nature of Islamic religious education that has become part of the Iraqi public education system as one example. She also noted that minorities detest an Iraqi law that automatically converts the minor children of Christian parents to Islam if one of the parents also converts. The Minister said that her efforts to overturn this law were rebuffed by a four-judge panel from the Judicial Council.

LGBT

16. (C) A/S Feltman and NEA Senior Advisor Slotkin underscored the seriousness with which the U.S. treats reports that men from Iraq's LGBT community have been targeted and killed over the past year. The Minister said that the MoHR has chosen to deal with these attacks as ordinary crimes, rather than hate crimes, for fear that if a public inquiry is made specifically about the LGBT community that the community would be targeted even more aggressively by extremist elements, such as the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). Selim said that the MoHR did not have statistics on the number of Iraqi LGBT members who may have been killed, and that a letter sent to the Ministry of Interior asking about accusations made in the media did not yield any information. In addition, she said it was difficult for protection to be provided to the LGBT community because no one would publicly declare themselves a member for fear of being targeted.

17. (U) NEA Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman cleared this cable.

HILL